

# NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



## RACVB Celebrates the Opening of the UW Health Sports Factory on June 1

*Annual Luncheon features author Peter Kageyama, highlights tourism wins  
and kicks off the grand opening of the new sports facility*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 1, 2016**

**Rockford, IL** – The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau shows love for their region and celebrates major tourism wins for the community on Wednesday, June 1, 2016 during the organization's Annual Luncheon, which is presented by SwedishAmerican, a division of UW Health. The luncheon takes place in the brand new UW Health Sports Factory and is directly followed by the grand opening of the sports facility.

At this first-ever event held at the UW Health Sports Factory in downtown Rockford, the luncheon gives the community its first look at the expansive and transformational riverfront development. Tours gave guests a change to explore the facility prior to the event and after the ribbon cutting.

**Keynote Speaker:** Peter Kageyama, author of *For the Love of Cities* and *Love Where You Live*, serves as this year's keynote speaker. He explores what makes cities lovable, what motivates ordinary citizens to do extraordinary things for their cities and how people who are truly in love with their cities are the key to the future development of communities.

### **Tourism in Winnebago County Means...**

- Visitors to Winnebago County spent \$340 million at area businesses in 2014 (the largest amount on record!)
- Visitors to Winnebago County generated \$5.57 million in local tax receipts in 2014 (funds that help local governments pay for services residents rely on.)
- 7,662,205 guests visited attractions and events in Winnebago County in 2015.
- Visitor spending in Winnebago County supported 2,700 jobs in the hospitality sector in 2014.
- 504,380 total visitors and residents anticipated to use the UW Health Sports Factory in the first year.
- \$16.5 million generated annually of new private sector economic activity and \$1.9 million generated annually in new tax revenue (combined with Mercy Sportscore 2 improvements)
- 225 permanent jobs upon opening (combined with Mercy Sportscore 2)

"Sports tourism has reached an all-time high with \$16.5 million in visitor spending being pumped into our region annually. It's truly exhilarating to look back on the infancy stages of the Reclaiming First initiative where a single idea has transformed into a reality for our community and the gears are now spinning into motion," said Josh Albrecht, RACVB Director of Marketing & Public Affairs. "This project signifies many

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accomplishments and with all the hard work put in, our partnerships continue to strengthen. With the opening of UW Health Sports Factory and the many upgrades and expansion plans in the works at Mercy Sportscore 2, we're already scoring big - and it's just the beginning."

### **About UW Health Sports Factory**

The UW Health Sports Factory opens June 1 as a new venue in the region's sports tourism facility portfolio. The former riverfront manufacturing site underwent a complete transformation as part of the region's Reclaiming First capital improvement projects. The 108,000 sq. ft., multi-function facility will feature 96,000 sq. ft. of hard court surfaces which can be used as 8 basketball courts, 16 volleyball courts, or 42 pickleball courts, and can accommodate 16 wrestling mats with seating for up to 3,700 spectators.

The facility complements the region's recreational and tournament facilities currently operated by the Rockford Park District. These amenities will allow the Rockford region to retain, regain and grow sports tourism in an increasingly competitive market and provide world-class amateur sports tournament facilities for visitors and residents to utilize. There currently are 55 total booked events, with 15 confirmed events in 2016 alone.

*The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com)*

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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